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NZ PM CALLS OFF WEDDING AMID OMICRON OUTBREAK

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Sunday her own wedding plans stand cancelled as she announced fresh Covid curbs

DECISION AFTER DETECTION OF COVID CLUSTER

Ardern's marriage with TV host Clarke Gayford was scheduled for next weekend. The couple had got engaged in 2019 and they have a two-year-old daughter. The decision to call off the wedding follows discovery of nine Omicron cases in a family that travelled to Auckland. Following this, it was decided that the entire country be placed under the highest level of Covid curbs

GOOD TRACK RECORD OF MANAGING COVID

The fresh restrictions include a cap of 100 vaccinated people at events and mask wearing in shops and on public transport
New Zealand has operated under strict Covid rules since the start of the pandemic, allowing it to keep deaths to a minimum
It managed the Delta variant, with an average of 20 daily cases

93%

NEW ZEALANDERS OVER 12 YEARS ARE FULLY VACCINATED; 52% HAVE GOT BOOSTER SHOTS

Govt accepts community transmission

Further spread of Omicron is expected to happen internally and not from abroad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Omicron variant of the coronavirus has reached the community transmission stage in India and has become dominant in multiple metros where new cases have been rising exponentially, the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG) said in its latest bulletin on Sunday.

The two-page bulletin of January 10, released on Sunday, added that while most Omicron cases so far are asymptomatic or mild, hospitalisations and ICU cases are increasing in the current wave.

It also said an infectious sub-variant of Omicron, BA.2, has been detected in a considerable fraction in India. "BA.2 lineage is a substantial fraction in India and S-gene dropout-based screening is thus likely to give high false negatives. Tests suitable for PCR based screening applicable to all Omicron lineages have been approved for use," it said.

As for the recently reported B.1.640.2 lineage, it is being monitored. "There is no evidence of rapid spread and while it has features of immune escape, it is currently not a variant of concern. So far, no case has been detected in India," the bulletin added.

India reported 3,33,533 new Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the active caseload to 21,87,205. While the daily positivity rate and weekly positivity rate stand at 17.78% and 16.87% respectively, the recovery rate is 93.18%.

"Further spread of Omicron in India is now expected to be through internal transmission, not foreign travellers, and a revised sampling and sequencing strategy of INSACOG is being worked out to address genomic surveillance objectives in the wake of dynamic changing scenario of virus infection," the bulletin added. INSACOG is a consortium of 38 laboratories under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that monitor the genomic variations in Covid-19.

NATIONAL PEAK IN 14 DAYS?

National peak expected in the next fortnight, a preliminary analysis by IIT-M's Dept of Maths and Centre of Excellence for Computational Maths and Data Science said

R-value is the number of people a Covid+ person can infect. It's no longer a pandemic if R-value drops below 1

India's R-value in the Jan 14-21 week dropped to 1.57

R-value was 2.2 in Jan 7-13 week, 4 in Jan 1-6 and 2.9 in Dec 25-31

The R-value of Mumbai was 0.67, Delhi 0.98, Chennai 1.2 and Kolkata 0.56

INDIA WISE JAN 22

Fresh cases: 3,33,533
Recoveries: 2,42,676
Deaths: 488

STATE WISE JAN 22

Fresh cases: 42,400
Recoveries: 31,960
Deaths: 26

First vax dose coverage 100% in K'taka: Sudhakar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

ONE year and seven days after the Covid vaccine drive was launched, Karnataka has completed 100 per cent coverage of the first dose, said Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar on Sunday.

Taking to Twitter, he said Karnataka is the first state in the country to achieve this. "This is a matter of pride and I thank all health workers and government officials. Some districts are at 97 per cent to 99 per cent with respect to the first dose coverage, but overall the state average has crossed 100 per cent. The second dose coverage is at 85 per cent," he said. While the target for the 18-plus population was set at 4,89,16,000, the cov-

Over 50K cases in state

Karnataka on Sunday reported 50,210 cases, breaking the pandemic's second wave record just 23 days into the third wave.

erage was at 4,89,29,819. Some districts like Dharwad, Bidar, Davanagere, Belagavi, Bagalkot, Hassan, Kolar, Mysuru, Gadag, Chikmagalur, Vijayapura and Kodagu have gone beyond 100 per cent in their first dose coverage, as per data shared by the minister. The districts lagging in the second dose coverage and are below the state average of 85 per cent are Kalaburagi, Raichur, Yadagiri, Chitradurga, Dakshina Kannada, Belari, Bengaluru Urban, Shivamogga, Chamarajanagar and Dharwad.

Missing Arunachal teen found by the PLA?

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @Guwahati

THE controversy surrounding the alleged abduction of an Indian boy by the People's Liberation Army of China could soon end, as the PLA claims to have found a missing boy from Arunachal Pradesh.

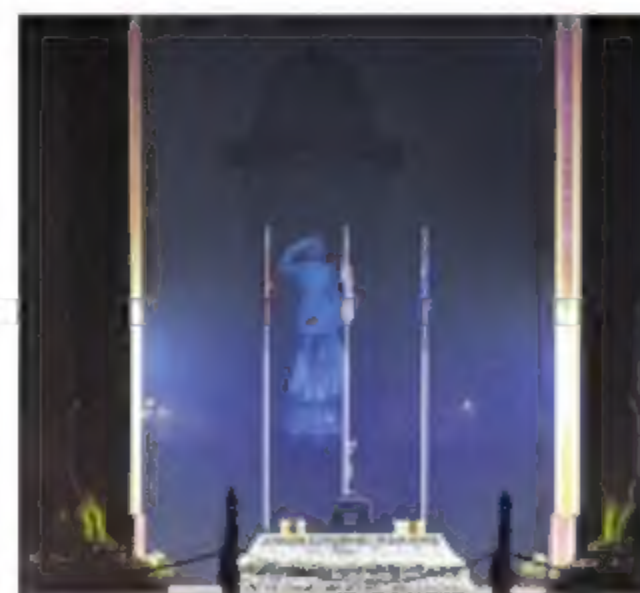
"The PLA has informed the Indian Army that they have found a missing boy. Since only one person (Miram Taron) is missing, we believe it is he," a senior Army officer said. Due procedure would be followed before the boy is handed over.

The family of the 17-year-old Miram, who hails from Upper Siang district, was overjoyed when this correspondent broke the news over the phone. "Thank you so much, sir. I cannot express in words how happy I am. I pray that the boy they found is Miram," his father Opang said. "He will be received by our entire Zido village when he arrives home." Miram has never been to that forest before and the father said he would not allow the minor to go to the place again. His mother, Kutjit, said, "I am feeling

very good." She had been experiencing hypertension ever since Miram's disappearance. The incident occurred on January 18 when Miram and his friend, Johnny Yaying, had ventured into a forest at the fuzzy India-China border to hunt wild animals and collect herbs. While Miram was nabbed by the PLA, Johnny fled. Both youngsters are from the same village. The site of the incident is around 35-40 km away. Opang said he was at Tuting on January 17 when his son had set out for the forest.

Was out on puja hunt

"We have a puja in mid-February where, as per a customary practice, I would give my sisters dry meat. As the meat needs to be dried before being gifted, Miram had gone out early for hunting," father Opang said



The hologram statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose unveiled by PM Narendra Modi at India Gate in New Delhi on Sunday. A grand statue, made of granite, will eventually replace the hologram statue | PTI/PTI

Netaji's statue will be shifted to front of Soudha, says CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

ON a day Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the hologram of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at the India Gate in New Delhi, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai declared on Sunday that the Netaji statue on the premises of Vidhana Soudha will be shifted to the front of the majestic legislature building.

"The statue, which is behind Vidhana Soudha near the western gate now, should be shifted to a suitable spot befitting the honour he deserved. A decision will be taken soon. Netaji's next birth anniversary will be celebrated in front of Vidhana Soudha," Bommai said after paying tributes to the freedom fighter on his 125th birth anniversary.

Later inaugurating the flying school at Jakkur that was defunct for some time, Bommai announced that 75 Netaji Amrit NCC schools will be set up in the state.

"Books and articles on Netaji will be brought out in Kannada and distributed to our youth as the government has also decided to celebrate Netaji's 125th birth anniversary throughout the year. Children will be introduced to Netaji's ideals and objectives by organising debates, exhibitions and other programmes at all schools and colleges," he added.

The government will respond positively to the demands of various organisations that have been working to promote Netaji's ideals, he promised.

"Netaji gave a big thrust to the freedom struggle by uniting world powers of that time to wage a battle in India against the British empire. Netaji had a big role in India attaining freedom," he remarked.

Netaji inspired the youth with his call, 'give me blood and I will give you freedom'. He laid a strong foundation for the freedom struggle by inducting 60,000 youth into Azad Hind Fauj
Basavaraj Bommai, Chief Minister

German navy chief in Ukraine mess resigns

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WHETHER or not the Ukraine situation is amicably resolved between the US-led NATO and Russia, it left the German navy chief jobless. Vice admiral Kay-Achim Schoenbach, who was in India last week, had to resign after coming under fire for siding with Russian president Vladimir Putin during his speech at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

Delivering his controversial

address on Friday, Schoenbach said the idea that Russia would invade Ukraine was "non-sense" and wondered why would a big country want a tiny strip of Ukraine to integrate into it. He said Putin only wants respect. "Putin is probably putting pressure because he knows he can do it and he knows that it splits the European Union," Schoenbach said.

Furious over the remarks, Ukraine summoned German Ambassador Anka Feldhusen to express its displeasure. While Germany distanced itself from its navy chief's comments, Schoenbach admitted his remarks were somewhat "rash" and tendered his resignation saying he wanted to prevent further damage to Germany and its military. Later, the German navy put out a statement saying Defence

Minister Christine Lambrecht had accepted the resignation and appointed his deputy as interim naval chief.

Germany has insisted that it stands united with its NATO allies on the issue of Russia's military threat to Ukraine, warning that Moscow will pay a high price if it makes any military moves against its neighbour.

But unlike many other NATO countries, Berlin says it won't supply Ukraine with lethal weapons.



A family walks towards a helicopter after Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai launched a heli-tourism project at Jakkur aerodrome in Bengaluru on Sunday. The government has signed MoUs with Thumbay Aviation and Chipson Aviation to offer heli-tourism services | SHRIRAM BN

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